

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 06464 140813Z
ACTION OES-07

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TBIO, JA
SUBJECT: RESULTS OF SURVEY ON ATTITUDES TOWARD GENETIC
ENGINEERING

REF: TOKYO A-33

1. THE RESULTS OF A KEIDANREN (JAPAN FEDERATION OF
ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS) SPONSORED SURVEY OF ATTITUDES OF
LEADING FIRMS TOWARD GENETIC ENGINEERING WERE MADE PUBLIC
ON APRIL 10. QUESTIONNAIRES WERE SENT TO 114
COMPANIES WHICH AT SOME TIME MIGHT EMPLOY GENETIC
ENGINEERING, OF WHICH 67 RESPONDED. NINETY-SIX PER CENT
(64) THOUGHT GENETIC ENGINEERING RESEARCH WAS VALUABLE
TO INDUSTRY. MAJORITY OPINION WAS THAT IT IS NECESSARY
TO CARRY OUT R&D TO PREVENT JAPAN FROM FALLING
BEHIND IN THIS FIELD. ALL RESPONDENTS WERE AWARE OF THE
POSSIBLE DANGERS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING AND AGREED THAT
SOME TYPE OF MECHANISM WAS NECESSARY TO CONTROL RESEARCH
IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE SUCH DANGERS, BUT OPINION WAS
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DIVIDED ON HOW MUCH WEIGHT TO GIVE TO THIS PROBLEM. MOST
FAVORED A LOOSE SYSTEM OF CONTROLS AND THOUGHT THAT A
SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT-SET GUIDANCE FOR EXPERIMENTS TO BE
ENFORCED BY ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE WAS SUFFICIENT.
THIRTY PER CENT, HOWEVER, FAVORED A STRICT SYSTEM OF
NATIONAL CONTROLS WITH PROVISIONS FOR INSPECTIONS AND
PENALTIES. ONLY THREE FIRMS HAD HAD EXPERIENCE WITH

GENETIC ENGINEERING, WHILE 20 SAID THEY MIGHT USE IT IN THE FUTURE. THE FIRMS LOOKED ON THE RESEARCH AS A SORT OF "NATIONAL PROJECT" AND EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO PLAY A BIG ROLE IN PREVENTING MISUNDERSTANDINGS FROM OCCURRING (AMONG THE PUBLIC).

2. SINCE LAST FALL THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL (PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISORY BODY), THE SCIENCE COUNCIL OF JAPAN (EDUCATION MINISTER'S ADVISORY BODY), AND OTHER GROUPS HAVE BEEN LOOKING INTO THE SUBJECT OF GENETIC ENGINEERING BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME SUCH A SURVEY HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN INDUSTRIAL CIRCLES. MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

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